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Advancement of women

Measures taken and progress achieved in the promotion of women and political participation

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/130, provides precise data on the political participation of women at all levels and describes measures taken by Member States to ensure women's equal participation. It concludes with recommendations for further action to accelerate the achievement of equality between women and men in political participation at all levels.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 66/130 on women and political participation, the General Assembly called upon Member States to enhance the political participation of women and accelerate the achievement of equality between men and women. It urged all States to take action to ensure women's equal participation, including in times of political transition, by reviewing electoral systems for their impact on the participation of women; implementing appropriate measures to eliminate barriers to women's participation; encouraging political parties to remove barriers that discriminate against the participation of women; promoting awareness of the importance of women's participation in the political process; developing training to support women's participation in the electoral process; and investigating allegations of violence against women elected officials and candidates.

2. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit at its sixty-eighth session a report on the implementation of the resolution. It encouraged Governments to provide precise data on the political participation of women at all levels, including, where appropriate, information on the political participation of women in times of political transition. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request. The examples set out in the report are based on the responses, unless otherwise indicated, of 42 Member States[1] and seven United Nations entities.[2] The report also draws on the recent report of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice (A/HRC/23/50).

II. Background

3. The normative framework for women's political participation is derived from a number of sources, including human and political rights declarations, conventions and resolutions. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines the principles of non-discrimination and equal enjoyment of political rights, including the right of women and men to take part in the government of their country. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women articulates women's equal right to participation in political and public life, including the right to vote in all elections and public referenda, eligibility for election to all publicly elected bodies and participation in the formulation and implementation of government policy.

4. The Convention states that States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country, including through temporary special measures. In its resolution 1990/15, the Economic and Social Council recommended specific targets for increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions to 30 per cent by 1995 and 50 per cent

[1] Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Croatia, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Malawi, Mexico, Montenegro, Namibia, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Saint Lucia, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States of America and Zimbabwe.

[2] Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Political Affairs, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Peacebuilding Support Office, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

by 2000. The Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 assessed progress towards those goals, and States adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, according to which Governments committed to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making, and to establish the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, public administrative entities and the judiciary. The Platform for Action became a major catalyst for Governments to introduce temporary special measures, such as quotas, in order to increase women's political participation. In its resolution 1325 (2000), the Security Council urged Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict resolution and peace processes. However, despite the decades of mobilization and effort undertaken in that regard, the General Assembly voiced its concern, in resolution 66/130, that women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere.

III. Thematic analysis: overview of data and progress

5. While some progress has been achieved over the past three decades, women remain marginalized from political decision-making in every region of the world. In some regions, economic development and rapid growth have not been accompanied by gender equality gains. In other regions, the dismantling of authoritarian regimes and transition to democracy have not always been accompanied by a substantial increase in women's representation in new political institutions.

6. Such trends are reflected in the low numerical presence of women in elected and appointed bodies. The standard indicator used to monitor progress on women's political participation is the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. That data has been tracked and made available by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for over three decades and is also one of the indicators used to monitor progress towards the attainment of Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals, on promoting gender equality and empowering women. Data on women Heads of State and Government is also regularly collected. However, the participation of women in other elected bodies, such as local governments, and in primarily appointed bodies, such as at the executive/ministerial level and public administration, is not regularly collated globally.

A. Participation of women in elected bodies

1. Legislative level

7. Few Member States have achieved the target set out in resolution 1990/15 of 30 per cent women in decision-making positions by 1995. At the legislative level, only 35 national parliaments comprise 30 per cent or more women as at June 2013,[3]

[3] In single or lower houses of parliament as of June 2013: Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, Grenada, Guyana, Iceland, Italy, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania. Data reflects the proportion of women elected; the current number may have increased or decreased in post-election periods owing to resignations or other factors. See IPU Parline Database, available from http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp.

up from five national parliaments in 1995. In respect of the Platform for Action, only 2 of the 35 countries, namely, Andorra and Rwanda, have achieved or surpassed the target of gender balance in their parliaments, as set out in the Platform for Action.

8. The 35 countries share some commonalities, including that 91 per cent employ proportional representation or mixed electoral systems and over 50 per cent have legislated electoral quotas.[4] Twelve are developed States, nine are sub-Saharan States, eight are Latin American and Caribbean States and three are from Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. Only one State each in the Middle East and North Africa region, the South Asia region, and the East Asia, South Asia and Pacific region have met the threshold (Algeria, Nepal and Timor-Leste). Nine of the 35 are post-conflict States. Experience shows that periods of transition offer opportunities to implement strategies and measures to enhance the political participation of women.

9. The majority of Member States (115) register between 10 and 29 per cent women members of parliament. Of those, most are from sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin American and the Caribbean, and 16 are developed States. In 64 per cent of the States there are no legislated gender quotas.

10. In 37 States, women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians, notably in the East Asia, South Asia and Pacific regions (12), in the sub-Saharan Africa region (7) and in the Middle East and North Africa region (5). Most of the 37 States use majority electoral systems, and 90 per cent of them have no electoral quotas.

11. There are wide divergences between regions, as reflected in figure I. The developed region has the highest proportion of women members of parliament, at 27.8 per cent, followed closely by the Latin American and Caribbean region, at 25.6 per cent. Despite recent progress, the Middle East and North Africa region continues to have the lowest average overall, including one State with no women members of parliament. In 2013, Saudi Arabia appointed women members to the Consultative Council for the first time.[5] As a subregion, Oceania registers the lowest proportion of women members at 3.2 per cent, including three parliaments with no women members.[6] On average, across all regions, women hold 21.2 per cent of seats in single or lower houses of parliament, up from 11.6 per cent in 1995.

12. In addition, 78 States are bicameral with upper houses of parliament. Many of the chambers are appointed or indirectly elected (40 per cent). The average proportion of women members in upper houses is 18.8 per cent. Of the 78 States, only 16 have surpassed the 30 per cent threshold.[7]

13. The global average of women members of parliament in all chambers combined stands at 20.9 per cent as at June 2013. While this represents an increase of 7.1 points since 2000, when the United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted, progress has been slow and uneven. The participation of women in

[4] Fifteen have legislated candidate quotas and four have reserved seats for women. In addition, 10 countries have voluntary quotas adopted by political parties.

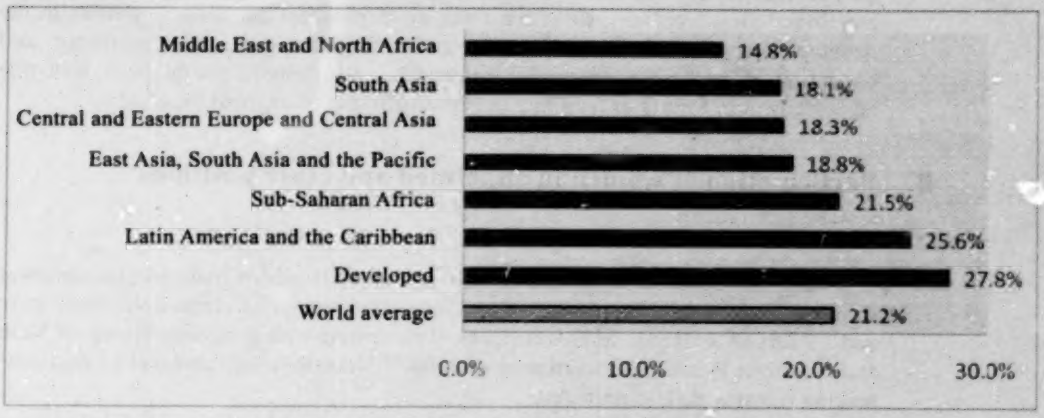
[5] A royal order issued in 2013 provided that women should constitute 20 per cent of the members in the Council.

[6] Average proportion of women parliamentarians in States of the Oceania subregion, excluding Australia and New Zealand, which are covered under the developed region. The Federated States of Micronesia, Palau (lower house) and Vanuatu have no women members of parliament.

[7] IPU, "Women in national parliaments". Available from http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm.

parliament has been increasing with less than one percentage point per year and remains well below global targets. Women's access to the highest parliamentary positions, including Presiding Officer of Parliament, stands at 14.2 per cent of all posts.[8] The gender balance target will not be reached by States unless additional measures are taken to facilitate women's access to legislatures.

Figure I
Women in parliament by region: single and lower houses



Source: IPU, Parline Database. Available from http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp.
Note: The regional designations are intended for statistical convenience and do not necessarily express a judgement about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process.

2. Local governments

14. Reporting on data at the subnational level is sporadic. Thirty States reported information on the proportion of women mayors and councillors. A few States reported that the proportion of women councillors exceeded 30 per cent (Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Finland, Ireland, Namibia, South Africa, Spain, Saint Lucia, Sweden and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Several States noted that there is a drop in the proportion of women members at the mayoral or executive committee level, compared with the proportion who are councillors.

15. Despite the importance of measuring progress at the local government level, there is no global baseline measurement of women's participation at that level and no central repository to track advancements in that area. A welcome initiative involves the tracking of data at the regional level, in particular through the regional commissions. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, regularly compiles data on the percentage of women elected mayors and city council members for 28 countries in the region. Similarly, the Economic Commission for Europe collects information for 36 countries about women in municipal councils. The organization United Cities and Local Governments, a member driven, non-profit umbrella organization for cities, local governments and municipal associations throughout the world, established in 2004, sporadically publishes data on women councillors and mayors. Further collaboration across the regional

[8] IPU, "Women in parliament in 2012: the year in perspective". Available from http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/WIP2012e.pdf.

commissions and with other relevant institutions could facilitate the availability of regional and global data on women's representation in local government.

3. Women candidates for election

16. Some States report on the proportion of women candidates who stand for election, using data from electoral management bodies, national statistical offices or parliamentary and local government resource centres. Available data suggests that on average women comprise less than 20 per cent of candidates for parliamentary elections.[9] However, the proportion rises to 45 per cent for some countries in the developed region (Belgium and Iceland). Regular systematic reporting and collection of such data nationally, regionally and globally would be a welcome advancement in efforts to facilitate the establishment of a global baseline.

B. Participation of women in appointed and other positions

1. Heads of State and Government

17. Regular reporting on the proportion of women Heads of State and Government shows an incremental increase. In 2013, 8 women served as elected Heads of State and 13 served as Heads of Government,[10] compared with 6 women Heads of State and 3 women Heads of Government in 2000.[11] Nevertheless, this level of decision-making remains male-dominated.

18. The access of women to hereditary Head of State positions remains uneven, with some countries continuing to prohibit such access either through law or in practice. While most States that maintain hereditary Heads of State do not discriminate according to sex, a few have preferences for male heirs.

2. Women in ministerial positions

19. Women's representation in executive or ministerial positions is even lower than in parliaments. In 2012, women accounted for just 16.7 per cent of ministerial positions worldwide.[12] Only 27 countries had surpassed the 30 per cent threshold for women ministers.[13] In 144 countries, women occupy less than one quarter of the ministerial posts[14] and tend to dominate in portfolios related to social, family and women's affairs, education, employment and the environment. Figure II reflects the proportion of women ministers by region. Since most ministerial posts are appointed

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[9] *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.XVII.11), p. 114.

[10] Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Costa Rica, Denmark, Germany, Jamaica, Liberia, Lithuania, Malawi, San Marino, Slovenia, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Trinidad and Tobago. Some hold the post of Head of State and Government simultaneously.

[11] Bangladesh, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, New Zealand, Panama, San Marino and Sri Lanka. Some hold the post of Head of State and Government simultaneously. See IPU and UN-Women, "Map on women in politics: 2012: situation on 1 January 2012".

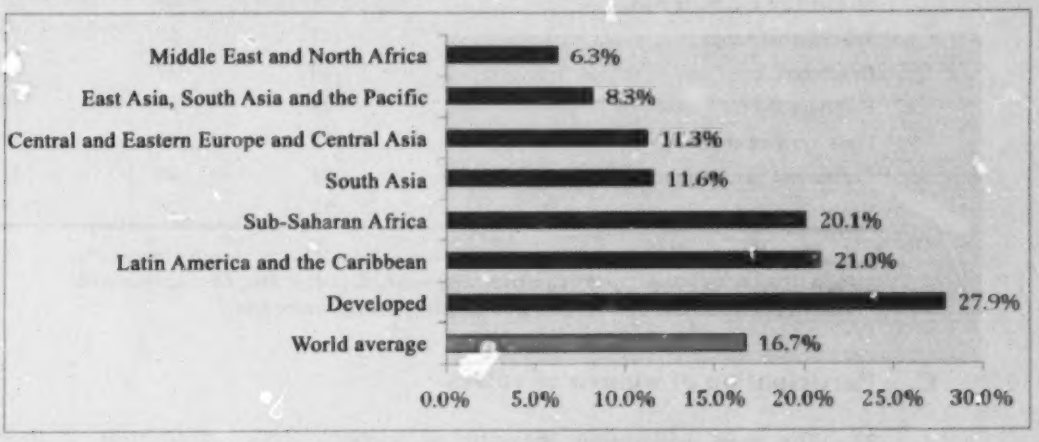
[12] IPU and UN-Women, "Map on women in politics: 2012 — situation on 1 January 2012".

[13] Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cape Verde, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, Gambia, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Rwanda, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Uganda and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

[14] Based on data from IPU and UN-Women (2012).

or nominated, the lower representation of women in those offices may primarily reflect a lack of political will.

Figure II
Proportion of women ministers by region



Source: Calculation by UN-Women, based on data collected by IPU (2012).

3. Judiciary

20. Women's participation in public life also extends to non-elected positions within the judiciary and public administration. Data on women in the judiciary is scarce. Globally, as at July 2010, women accounted for 27 per cent of judges, 26 per cent of prosecutors and only 9 per cent of police officers (see table). While the percentage of women judges approached 50 per cent in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and was over 30 per cent in the Latin American and Caribbean and developed regions, in no region did women's representation in the police surpass 13 per cent. Similarly, a study of 85 supreme and constitutional courts indicated that fewer than half had 30 per cent or more women members, and only 13 had women chief justices.[15]

21. Sex-disaggregated data on nominated public office holders is very uneven. Similarly, data on women's leadership in political parties, as community leaders, in trade unions and community-based organizations is not systematically collected (see A/HRC/23/50). Such an important knowledge gap needs to be closed.

[15] UN-Women, "Progress of the world's women 2011-2012: in pursuit of justice", p. 60.

Proportion of women in prosecution, judges and police by region

Region	*Judges (%)*	*Prosecution (%)*	*Police (%)*
South Asia	9	4	3
Middle East and North Africa	25	26	2
Sub-Saharan Africa	27	27	12
Developed	30	32	13
East Asia and the Pacific	24	22	10
Latin America and the Caribbean	36	42	10
Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asia	44	29	11
World	27	26	9

Source: UN-Women, "Progress of the world's women 2011-2012: in pursuit of justice".
Note: Aggregates are based on 99 countries with available police data, 66 countries with prosecution data and 88 countries with judges and magistrates data.

C. Participation of women as voters

22. The most widespread indicator of women's civic engagement is their participation as voters in elections. Many States have begun reporting sex-disaggregated data on voter registration through their electoral management bodies. However, most States do not report sex-disaggregated data on the turnout rates on election day (voter turnout data). The limited data available has not been systematized or aggregated over time and across regions, and it is therefore not possible to draw conclusions about progress or setbacks.

23. Available data suggests that voter turnout varies from region to region and is lowest among young voters. The turnout of women is frequently influenced by lower access to information and civic education, fear of political violence in the polling process and family responsibilities. Women who do go to the polls may face higher levels of targeted violence and may be subject to family voting practices that violate their freedom of choice. Women may not possess the required documentation to register and vote, such as identification documents or citizenship certificates, in particular in times of conflict or political transition. Further efforts are therefore needed, including conducting gender analyses of voter registration practices and voter turnout, and systematic reporting of the data in order to strengthen the knowledge base and design appropriate policy or programme responses.

D. Challenges affecting women's political participation

24. Systemic and legal barriers to women's political participation persist at all levels and in multiple forms, and include culture and patriarchy, lack of financial resources, the challenge of balancing family and professional obligations, and lack of support by political parties. Member States reported that stereotyping and traditionally prescribed gender roles foster views of women as unqualified for political office (Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Italy, Philippines and Zimbabwe). The situation is compounded by their lower socioeconomic position in most States, with women lacking the basic resources or

economic independence necessary to pursue public office. Political empowerment therefore goes hand-in-hand with the economic empowerment of women.

25. Male-dominated power structures continue to hinder women who consider political careers. Several States noted that candidate selection processes within political parties can serve as a barrier (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan and Zimbabwe). Political parties are the gateway to political office; however, few women are nominated as electoral candidates since party leaders tend to select men. Women are hampered by fewer family and business connections, have relatively less access to the financial and social capital required for campaigning, have less experience in local government or are not sitting incumbents. Household duties, including unpaid care work, reproductive roles and restricted mobility, lower the ability of women to campaign and attend political meetings.

26. Even after navigating the nomination processes of political parties, women may encounter other institutional and structural barriers, including those related to the electoral system, absent or weak legal protections against gender-based violence and a gender-biased electorate. Mainstream media contributes to the challenge through negative stereotyping and unequal coverage of women candidates, reinforcing the prevailing gender bias against women.

E. Collection of sex-disaggregated data

27. While progress has been made on international standards and guidelines for the collection of gender statistics, the preparation of the present report was hampered by the limited availability of comparable statistics on women's political participation across a range of areas. Some of the data collected is often not comparable because definitions, collection methods and sources vary from country to country, in particular at the subnational level.

28. In addition, a wider variety of data beyond the number of women holding seats in parliament is needed, in particular in view of the run-up to the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2015. It is also important for States as they consider the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals, including indicators to measure progress on gender equality. The efforts of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics resulted in the development of a minimum set of 52 gender indicators; their use was agreed by the Statistical Commission in its decision 44/109. However, indicators such as women's representation in local governments or women voters and candidates were not included in the set. Additional efforts are needed to support expanded data collection.

IV. Measures taken by States

A. Constitutional reforms

29. In accordance with international obligations, and as a first step towards embodying the principle of equality between men and women, gender equality should be enshrined in constitutions, and/or existing discriminatory provisions should be removed. States reported on the presence of constitutional provisions

guaranteeing equality among citizens or equality between women and men in all aspects before the law.[16] Non-discrimination clauses, including the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex or gender and other criteria are incorporated into many constitutions. Several States reported specific provisions guaranteeing women's rights in the constitution, including El Salvador, Malawi, Montenegro, the Philippines and Sweden.

30. Constitutions can also provide the foundation for promoting women's participation in civic and political life. Some States reported provisions that directly address political participation (Ireland, Italy, Pakistan, Portugal, Turkey and Zimbabwe). Others reported on guarantees for women's participation as voters, including Burkina Faso and the Niger. A few constitutions set forth the gender balance between women and men in elected and appointed posts,[17] and the Plurinational State of Bolivia includes the principle of parity and the alternation of men and women on electoral lists for members of subnational assemblies.

31. Thirty-three States provide for the implementation of temporary special measures or affirmative action in their constitutions.[18] Such a positive trend can be attributed to the ratification of the Convention and the implementation of concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, together with the active campaigning of women's movements (see A/HRC/23/50). Under the Convention, States parties are obligated to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life. The Convention provides that temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between women and men should not be considered discrimination. The meaning and scope of temporary special measures are further outlined in paragraph 22 of general recommendation No. 25 (2004) of the Committee and are broadly defined to include legislative, executive, administrative or other regulatory instruments, policies and practices, including allocation of resources, preferential treatment, targeted recruitment and promotion, numerical goals connected with time frames and quota systems.

32. The most frequently legislated temporary special measure is the adoption of quotas in electoral arrangements. Quotas usually set a numerical target for women to be nominated as candidates or as elected representatives, although they may also be formulated to apply to either sex. Twenty-three States make provision for quotas in their constitutions.[19] The constitutional provisions of Rwanda and Burundi extend

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[16] Bahrain, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Namibia, Oman, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Saint Lucia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Zimbabwe. According to a 2013 UN-Women database on gender equality constitutional provisions, and based on an analysis conducted by UN-Women of codified and non-codified constitutions in 185 countries, 136 States have constitutional provisions on equality.

[17] Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ecuador.

[18] Including responses received from Argentina, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malawi, Montenegro, Namibia, Pakistan, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

[19] Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, France, Guyana, India, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, South Sudan, Swaziland, Thailand, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Based on an analysis of 183 countries for which data is available. However, not all these States have enacted gender quotas in national legislation.

quotas to the local government level, and the unique system in India of rotating reserved seats in *panchayat* elections is provided for in the constitution.

33. United Nations entities, including the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), have supported Member States in integrating gender equality provisions in national constitutions and reform processes. They supported the participation of women in constitution-making processes and promoted the sharing of best practices and lessons learned in different countries. UN-Women and UNDP convened a 2011 workshop to share comparative experiences across transitional countries (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen). The Department of Political Affairs and UNDP have prepared guidelines on good practices in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment and have provided technical support on constitution drafting, for example in Somalia. UN-Women has undertaken a global mapping of gender equality provisions in national constitutions, compiled in a searchable database, and produced a case study of lessons learned on ongoing constitutional processes.

B. Electoral law reforms and quotas

34. Member States employ a variety of electoral systems adopted for their national contexts. Experience shows, however, that larger numbers of women are elected under proportional electoral systems (24.6 per cent) than under First Past the Post majority or plurality systems (18.5 per cent).[20] The proportion of women elected in mixed systems is 21.5 per cent. In plurality or majority electoral systems, one candidate is usually elected per district, and political parties tend to nominate the candidates they view as most likely to win, usually men. In proportional systems, several candidates are elected in a district. Voters usually choose between political parties, rather than between individual candidates, and parties may be more inclined to compile diversified lists of candidates that include women. Evidence shows that the type of electoral system can greatly affect a woman's chances of being elected.

35. Electoral systems alone do not determine the level of women's representation, but they can be used together with temporary special measures to promote women's participation. Analysis of available evidence indicates that the most substantial increases in women's representation usually occur when electoral quotas are applied to a system involving proportional representation.

36. In order to address the uneven access of women to parliaments and the obstacles they face in the electoral process, 64 countries across all regions have adopted legislation on electoral quotas, primarily in the past two decades.[21] On average, countries with electoral quotas elected 25 per cent women members of parliament, compared with 19 per cent for those with no quotas.

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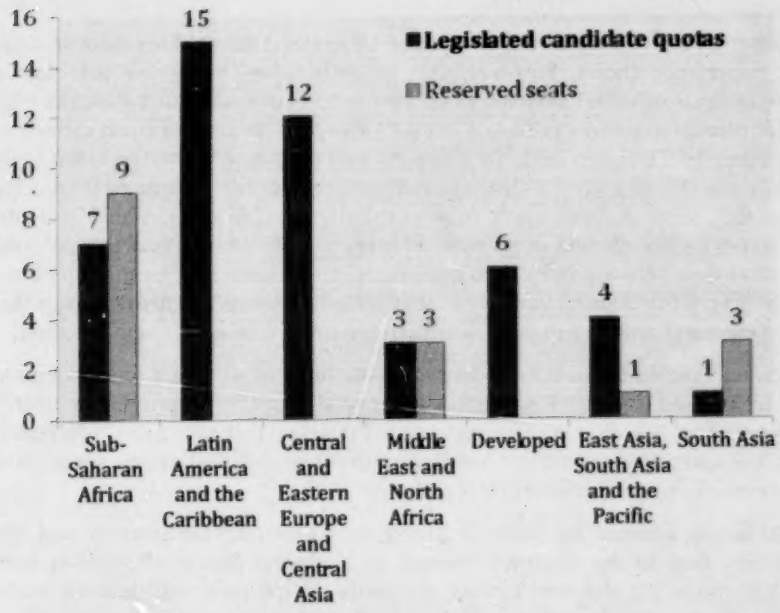
[20] Based on an analysis of 183 countries for which data is available. See IPU Parline Database, available from http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp.

[21] Based on an analysis of 183 countries, for which data is available; 48 countries have candidate nomination quotas, 16 have reserved seats and 118 have no legislated measures (although political parties may have adopted voluntary quotas). See International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IPU and Stockholm University, Global Database of Quotas for Women. Available from http://www.quotaproject.org. See also IPU Parline Database.

37. There are two main types of electoral quotas: candidate quotas and reserved seats. The former requires that women comprise a minimum number of candidates on party lists, while the latter requires that a number of seats be set, which only women can contest. There are regional trends in the use of candidate quotas and reserved seats, as reflected in figure III. Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean report the highest rates of electoral quota implementation. Many countries in sub-Saharan Africa adopted electoral quotas in the aftermath of conflict, when new electoral laws were drawn up. Latin American States lead the way with candidate quotas, with 15 States having adopted reforms. In addition to legislated quotas, hundreds of political parties in all regions have taken action to adopt candidate quotas on a voluntary basis. Forty-eight States have adopted candidate quota legislation, which is most commonly used with proportional systems.[22] On average, women hold 25.2 per cent of parliamentary seats when this type of quota is implemented. Most of these laws prescribe that women or the underrepresented sex should constitute at least 30 to 33 per cent of the names on candidate lists (Argentina, El Salvador, Greece, Ireland and Portugal).

Figure III
Quotas by region



Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IPU and Stockholm University, Global Database of Quotas for Women. Available from http://www.quotaproject.org.

38. The provision for alternation or placement of women on the lists and the enforcement of numerical targets are important considerations for the successful implementation of candidate quotas. Some States specify the alternation or placement

[22] See http://www.quotaproject.org.

of women in certain positions on the lists (Argentina, Indonesia, Spain and Mexico). The most common enforcement measure of numerical targets is the rejection of candidate lists that do not meet the legal quota target, usually with the opportunity to correct the lists within a specified timeframe. Eleven States use financial penalties and/or incentives related to the allocation of public funding to political parties.[23] For example, in Burkina Faso, France, Ireland and Portugal, public funding can be cut by up to 50 per cent if the numerical target is not reached. Several States have reformed their quota laws after the initial introduction in order to strengthen the enforcement mechanisms in the absence of compliance by political parties.

39. Sixteen States use reserved seats, with allocations varying between one quarter and one third of representatives.[24] The average proportion of women elected in States using reserved seats is 23.9 per cent. The adoption of reserved seats does not preclude women from competing for open seats. In some countries, women may only be elected one or two times in reserved seats before having to take part in an open competition.

40. Electoral quotas can offer a potential technical solution to the structural problem of the underrepresentation of women, but they need to be supported with other measures, such as awareness-raising, capacity-building and promoting gender sensitive reforms in parliaments and political parties. Such efforts should not be limited to electoral processes and specific electoral events but should encompass continued and consistent support and advocacy for women's political participation in all decision-making processes.

41. The United Nations system continues to prioritize inclusive electoral processes. Technical advice to Member States on various electoral systems and their impacts on women's political participation continues to be an important part of assistance provided by the Department of Political Affairs, UNDP and UN-Women. The system-wide guideline for United Nations electoral needs assessments integrates a gender perspective, and gender analyses and recommendations are systematically included in the reports of Department of Political Affairs-led needs assessments.[25] Supporting national efforts in promoting women's participation is an important part of the activities undertaken by special political missions in many countries. United Nations electoral support to Member States has included, where applicable, advisory services on quotas and electoral reform and other measure to countries including Algeria, Cameroon, Chile, Egypt, Haiti, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Montenegro, Nepal, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Timor-Leste and Tunisia.

C. Political finance reforms

42. The substantial sums of money that are usually required to run a campaign and win the election constitute a common impediment for women political aspirants and

[23] Albania, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Croatia, France, Georgia, Ireland, Kenya, Niger, Portugal and Republic of Korea.

[24] Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Eritrea, Jordan, Kenya, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania.

[25] See Policy Guideline on United Nations Electoral Needs Assessments, FP/02/2012, issued by the focal point for electoral assistance. In addition, the Policy Directive on Principles and Types of United Nations Electoral Assistance, FP/01/2012, requires United Nations entities to mainstream a gender perspective into all aspects of electoral assistance provided to Member States.

candidates. In many countries, successful election is closely correlated with the amount of money raised for the campaign and for media exposure. Lack of finances disproportionately affects women candidates since they typically have less access to moneyed networks and credit, have less time and confidence to raise funds on their own behalf and may fear the repercussions of campaign costs on family budgets.

43. States are starting to adopt political finance reforms to level the playing field for women, although regulations vary in their target and effectiveness. In 117 States, legislation provides for the direct public financing of political parties, typically to cover campaign expenditures, training, party activities and intra-party institution-building.[26] Of the 117, 27 States[27] make the allocation of public funding dependent on fulfilling certain gender equality requirements. Recent reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Ireland and Mexico link political finance allocations to the promotion of women's participation in decision-making.

44. The use of public funding as an incentive for political parties to comply with quota regulations is the most common form of legislation on political financing, with 11 countries having enacted legislation to this effect.[26] Public funding can be used as an incentive to increase the number of women nominated in the absence of legislated electoral quotas, as in Italy. A few States have adopted measures to increase the proportion of public funding allocated specifically to women candidates (Canada, Haiti and Papua New Guinea). Thirteen countries require that political parties allocate a proportion of the public funds they receive to training and other actions needed to enhance women's political participation through earmarking provisions, as in Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama. In Togo, the candidate nomination fee is reduced if a party list contains women candidates, and in Finland, parliamentary parties must allocate a proportion of their annual party subsidy to fund women's wings.[26]

45. Measures such as establishing spending and contribution limits may help level the field; enforceable disclosure mechanisms for political parties and candidates can increase accountability; and legislation that prohibits illicit sources of funding or practices, such as vote buying, may significantly help women candidates. In addition, political parties in some States have adopted innovative measures to channel additional funding to women candidates. In Nigeria, many political parties waive party fees to eliminate the registration cost for women candidates. In Cyprus, the Czech Republic and Estonia, parties provide additional funds specifically to assist women candidates during the election campaign. In Australia, Canada and the United States of America, political parties have affiliated fundraising groups to raise money specifically for women candidates.

D. Measures taken by political parties

46. Several States reported action taken by political parties to promote women's leadership.[28] In most cases, the initiatives are taken by the parties themselves,

[26] International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Political Finance Database (2013). Available from http://www.idea.int/political-finance. It contains data for 180 countries.

[27] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Haiti, Honduras, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Niger, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Romania and Togo.

[28] Argentina, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Djibouti, El Salvador, Finland, Italy, Mexico, Montenegro, Pakistan, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.

without legislative requirements. Aside from the finance measures, actions include the voluntary adoption of quotas on party candidate lists for election and/or in the party's leadership structures, such as in Argentina, Australia, Cyprus, Finland, Romania and Zimbabwe. Other examples establish equal opportunity, non-discrimination and/or gender equality clauses in party manifestos and constitutions. Political parties in Argentina, Cyprus and Guatemala have enshrined such principles in their party regulations, explicitly prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex or gender.

47. The creation of women's wings within party structures is an additional measure. In Argentina, Croatia, Saint Lucia, Portugal and elsewhere, some political parties have established women's wings to provide dedicated forums for discussing and addressing women's issues within the party. Parties in other countries have introduced women's units to monitor the performance of the party against their own commitments and to advocate for women's priorities to be included in party policy. Some States reported that political parties offer targeted training to women political aspirants and adopt awareness-raising campaigns to improve access for women and to educate party members and constituents on gender sensitivity.

48. United Nations entities have assisted some States in becoming more inclusive. UNDP has supported advocacy strategies to promote more women candidates in Georgia and facilitated initiatives between women from different political parties in Uruguay to develop a common gender equality agenda. UNDP has compiled comparative experiences on the ways political parties advance women's participation and gender equality issues in a comprehensive guidebook.[29] UN-Women has supported the sensitization of political parties in southern Africa on the need to adopt gender-sensitive policies and to promote an enabling environment in which women can participate in elections, and has developed a check list for assessing the gender commitments of political parties in the Sudan.

E. Measures to address violence against women

49. Women must be able to vote, campaign and hold elected posts in a safe environment. Violence against women in political life discourages or prevents them from exercising their political rights, including their rights as voters, candidates, party supporters or public officials. The comprehensive investigation of allegations of violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials and candidates for political office is an important step in creating an environment conducive to women's political participation. Since recognition of such forms of violence is relatively new, few States report systematically about such incidences.

50. Eleven States reported on measures to investigate and prosecute violence against women in general.[30] Actions taken include strengthening laws against domestic and gender-based violence and the introduction of legislation to prevent, prosecute and eradicate violence against women. Heightening the gravity of sexual crimes is an effective deterrent, as reported by Italy, as are legislative measures

[29] UNDP and National Democratic Institute, *Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties: A Guidebook to Promote Women's Political Participation* (2012). Available from http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/gender%20and%20governance/EmpoweringWomenFor%20StrongerPoliticalParties.pdf.

[30] Argentina, Australia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Djibouti, Italy, Mexico, Montenegro and Romania.

preserving victims' privacy and protecting them against pressures to withdraw accusations. Some States have enhanced service provisions to victims of gender-based violence, including hotlines and support groups.[31]

51. Few States reported specific measures designed to prevent violence against women during elections or against women holding elected posts. The Plurinational State of Bolivia reported specific legislation targeted at preventing and prosecuting physical, psychological and sexual violence against women in politics, establishing penalties for acts of political harassment and violence against women candidates and elected and acting officials at all levels of government. The Mexican Senate examined a report on political gender-based violence and approved a draft decree to reform the law on violence against women and the electoral code. It also established a definition of acts that constitute political gender-based violence, including acts that force women elected officials to tender their resignation or prevent them from resuming their duties following justifiable leave. Public awareness campaigns to prevent violence against women in politics are also important. Burkina Faso implemented a pre-electoral awareness campaign to combat all forms of violence in politics, including gender-based violence.

52. United Nations entities, such as UNDP and UN-Women, are supporting initiatives to prevent violence against women in elections. Women's situation rooms, as established in Kenya, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone, bring together women and youth groups from civil society, the media, and the private and public sectors to work together to ensure peaceful electoral processes through advocacy, mediation, coordination, analysis, observation and documentation (see S/2012/732). The Department of Political Affairs and partners have introduced a training course on preventing and responding to electoral violence, which includes assessment of gender-based election violence. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has supported collaboration among various stakeholders in Madagascar to develop courses on gender equality, focusing on prevention of violence against women and women's political participation.

53. In general, solutions need to start with fact-based assessments, such as vulnerability mapping or violence monitoring, which can contribute to establishing the necessary evidence base in order to promote prevention and hold perpetrators accountable. Such efforts would also assist in better documenting the scope of the issue and would identify appropriate and effective mitigation measures.

F. Measures to promote a conducive environment

54. Many States reported on capacity-building initiatives for women's political participation.[32] Initiatives include providing peer support and capacity development for new office holders, promoting networking for women candidates and contacts with their constituencies, providing training to enable political parties to strengthen gender equality capacities and training aspiring women candidates for political office (including Cyprus, Guatemala, Japan and Montenegro). Training and skills

[31] Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Djibouti.

[32] Australia, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Egypt, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Montenegro, Oman, Portugal, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States of America and Zimbabwe.

development programmes cover topics such as electoral systems and processes, political leadership, campaigning, and information and communication technologies.

55. Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates reported political empowerment programmes to encourage women's participation. In Oman, a women's forum conducted research and held public events on women's empowerment. Guatemala included a training programme as part of a voter registration drive to inform women about their civic rights and responsibilities. Mexico reported that it includes gender-awareness training in the induction courses for new employees of the electoral management body. Greece implemented an awareness-raising campaign ahead of local elections, employing communications strategies such as television and radio spots, posters, billboards, leaflets and information kiosks to encourage voters to defy gender stereotypes in selecting their candidates. In Qatar, training on women's participation has been held with local institutions.

56. The media plays a critical role in creating an environment conducive to women's political participation since it can either perpetuate or challenge discriminatory norms and stereotypes, and contribute to increase or prevent women's access as voters or candidates to knowledge, role models and the public. Italy sponsored an initiative to establish a voluntary code for media outlets with guidelines on how to respect the image of women in media. In Cyprus, a programme promoted the visibility of women's issues and women candidates through an agreement with major media outlets to screen television spots urging citizens to vote for candidates of both sexes.

57. Some United Nations entities place particular emphasis on supporting States in building an environment conducive to women's participation. UN-Women worked in partnership with national partners in Mexico on the SUMA: Democracy is Equality initiative,[33] aiming to increase women's political participation by building knowledge and skills. It also supports women's capacity-building programmes in Cape Verde, Honduras, India, Jordan, Timor-Leste and other States. The Peacebuilding Support Office has supported civic education, dialogues and capacity development for women in Libya and Yemen. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has provided training in partnership with civil society organization in Haiti, South Sudan, Liberia and Timor-Leste. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has supported several States in promoting advocacy on women's political participation, and has implemented trainings, workshops and awareness-raising initiatives targeting Government officials, political parties and women's organizations. UNESCO is supporting the development of transformative leadership training for women in West Africa with various universities, targeting women from civil society. UNDP supports aspiring women candidates through trainings in Armenia, Djibouti, Libya and the Occupied Palestinian Territory; civic education in Papua New Guinea and Paraguay; the women's caucus in Pakistan; and dialogues between parliamentarians and civil society organizations to develop action plans on expanding women's political empowerment in Mongolia, Thailand and Viet Nam. UNDP and UN-Women have jointly carried out trainings in several countries on gender and elections, using the training methodology known as "Building Resources in democracy, governance and election". A United Nations system-wide effort led by the Department of Political Affairs resulted in the approval and

[33] SUMA (meaning sum of all parts) is an alliance of five civil society organizations working to increase the number of women in decision-making in Mexico.

dissemination of a common United Nations narrative on women's participation in political and electoral processes in 2012.

G. Youth participation

58. Initiatives targeting youth not only promote the participation of young women but can also have a sustainable, long-term impact by developing the capacity and confidence of a whole generation. Fourteen States reported on activities to enhance youth participation in civic education.[34] Good practices to support the political engagement of young women and girls focused on research, education of young women leaders and outreach to key community stakeholders. Several States reported actions to promote the sensitization and involvement of young people in public life, such as Croatia, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Saint Lucia and Switzerland, including the use of information technologies (games, applications and online contests) to promote youth participation at the local level, youth parliaments, youth representative programmes for participation in delegations at United Nations meetings, volunteer networks and national conferences on girls' leadership.

59. Mentoring is an important way to inspire girls and young women to strive towards assuming public and political leadership. Through the Equal Futures Partnership, launched by the United States of America,[35] opportunities for young women are expanded by highlighting women in public leadership as role models, encouraging research on girls and leadership, and supporting the development of online tools to interest girls in becoming public leaders. Programmes to promote youth political leadership at various levels (child parliaments, secondary school governments, regional associations) exist in many countries, including Djibouti and Switzerland. Other programmes capitalize on the technology savvy of youth by using web-based programmes to engage young people in local decision-making. In some cases, such as in Switzerland, the formation of youth parliaments are encouraged by convening regional or national conferences with them and/or assigning them a limited budget for community improvement programmes. In Djibouti, Oman and elsewhere, national institutions have been established to provide advisory services and take leadership in defining and implementing state policy for youth engagement.

60. Prioritization by the United Nations to promote youth participation is reflected in the 2013 United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth. The Action Plan commits United Nations entities to promoting an enabling environment for young people's participation in electoral and parliamentary processes, public administration and local governance at local, subnational and national levels. It includes a specific commitment to promoting the participation and presence of young women in political office at all levels. UNDP has supported youth initiatives with government and civil society partners to build the capacities of young women in political processes in Jordan, Lebanon and Kosovo, and regional initiatives to support youth participation in Latin America and the Caribbean. UN-Women has supported advocacy on young women's participation in Brazil, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, and

[34] Argentina, Bahrain, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Croatia, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Guatemala, Oman, Portugal, Saint Lucia and Switzerland.

[35] United States-led initiative in partnership with Australia, Benin, Bangladesh, Denmark, Finland, Indonesia, Jordan, the Netherlands, Peru, Senegal, Tunisia and the European Union.

skills development and mentorship for young women in Cameroon, Jordan and Uruguay.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

61. Important strides have been made by countries to promote women's political participation. Member States have reported various data illustrating numerical progress, and laws and other measures have been adopted and implemented, including capacity-building and sensitization campaigns. However, many obstacles remain. Member States cited gender-based discrimination, stereotypes and traditionally prescribed roles, unfavourable legal frameworks, lack of financial resources, lack of support by political parties and male incumbency as persistent challenges. There is also limited availability of comparable statistics on women's political participation across a range of areas, in particular at the local level and in appointed bodies.

62. A greater level of concerted action is needed to overcome the challenges and to ensure women's equal participation with men in political and public life. This is especially relevant in the light of the 20-year review appraisal and implementation of the Platform for Action, and the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals.

63. Member States are encouraged to show stronger political commitment by adopting comprehensive strategies that address the context-specific barriers to women's participation at all levels of decision-making, including in situations of political transition, such as:

(a) Ensuring a solid framework for gender equality, non-discrimination and women's equal participation through constitutional provisions, including the adoption of temporary special measures, in line with general recommendation No. 25 (2004) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

(b) Strengthening the legislative basis of gender balance at the national, subnational and local levels. This may include reviewing the political and social context to determine appropriate revisions to electoral laws, including electoral quotas, or reforming existing quota laws to ensure alternation or placement of women on the lists and effective implementation through enforcement mechanisms;

(c) Introducing political finance or other reforms that provide an incentive to political parties to increase the number of women candidates nominated, in particular when quotas are not in place, or earmarking funds for women candidates and/or women's wings within political parties;

(d) Increasing the proportion of women in appointed positions, including at the executive and ministerial levels across all sectors and ministries;

(e) Ensuring that data on women's political participation at all levels is systematically collected, including for appointed and elected positions, and that sex-disaggregated data is reported on candidates, voter registration and voter turnout;

(f) Supporting data collection on women's leadership in the judiciary, police, political parties, trade unions, professional or industry associations and community-based organizations;

(g) Recognizing and assessing the types of electoral and political violence that women encounter as voters, candidates and elected or appointed officials, and ensuring adequate legal provisions under which to prevent and prosecute it and protect women from it;

(h) Facilitating an enabling environment for women in political life, including through targeted awareness campaigns, media incentives and public recognition of the value of women's participation and contributions;

(i) Supporting young people, especially girls, to consider political careers, including through access to and visibility of role models, supportive mentoring programmes, and initiatives promoting youth participation and leadership.

64. As gatekeepers to the political process, political parties are encouraged to adopt reforms that promote women's leadership and participation at all levels, such as:

(a) Revising party statutes, policies and regulations, or adopting new ones, to include commitments to non-discrimination and gender equality;

(b) Adopting and enforcing temporary special measures to increase the proportion of women nominated for political office and in party leadership structures, including through electoral quotas;

(c) Creating and strengthening dedicated party forums and structures, such as women's wings or units, where appropriate, to demonstrate commitment to gender equality and to addressing women's issues within and outside the party;

(d) Investing in educational tools and programmes to support aspiring political leaders, in particular young women, including capacity-building and practical training on campaign messages, legal requirements, fundraising and campaign management.

65. The United Nations system and other international and regional organizations are encouraged to:

(a) Support and complement Member State efforts to provide data on women's political participation by establishing a mechanism to develop standards for data collection and to track the data worldwide on a regular basis;

(b) Increase assistance to support Member States in their national efforts by implementing training to support women in participating in electoral processes, political activities and other leadership activities;

(c) Increase assistance to support Member States in substantially enhancing women's political participation, including through building capacity and the sharing of experiences and best practices;

(d) Provide sustained, long-term support to national partners, including civil society organizations, in their efforts to become more gender sensitive and promote women's political participation.